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Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. By paragraph 10 of its resolution 68/27, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region and other concerned States, in accordance with paragraph 7 of its resolution 46/30 and taking into account the evolving situation in the region, and to seek from those States their views on the measures outlined in chapters III and IV of the study annexed to the report of the Secretary-General of 10 October 1990[1] or other relevant measures, in order to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. By paragraph 11 of the same resolution, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixty-ninth session a report on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. On 19 February 2014, the Office for Disarmament Affairs sent a note verbale to all Member States drawing their attention to paragraphs 10 and 11 of General Assembly resolution 68/27 and seeking their views on the matter. Replies, which have been received from Australia, Cuba, Ecuador, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Iraq on behalf of the League of Arab States, Israel, Lebanon, Mexico, Portugal, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine, are reproduced in section III below. A reply from the European Union has been received and is reproduced in section IV, in accordance with the modalities set out in resolution 65/276. Additional replies received from Member States will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Observations

3. The Secretary-General deeply regrets that the recent intensive diplomatic efforts to advance the Middle East peace process have reached an impasse. While the Middle East continues to be subject to serious challenges, he reiterates that it is in the best interest of both Israelis and Palestinians to end the conflict and resolve all final status issues, including Jerusalem, borders, refugees and security, leading to the establishment of a sovereign, independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace with a secure State of Israel. The Secretary-General stresses that there is no substitute to negotiations to achieve this vision. In the current fragile environment, the parties must exercise maximum restraint and avoid further unilateral actions, which would undermine the resumption of talks.

4. As stated in previous reports, the Secretary-General continues to call for the full implementation of all relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including Council resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009). He remains deeply committed to working towards a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace on the basis of existing principles and agreements and to lending all the necessary support of the United Nations to that end.

5. Since the previous report of the Secretary-General,[2] the facilitator for the postponed conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, Jaakko Laajava, Under-

[1] A/45/435.

[2] A/68/124 (Part I) and Add.1 and 2.

Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland, together with the conveners for the conference, the Secretary-General and the co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East adopted by the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, intensified their efforts aimed at bringing the States of the region together to discuss and reach agreement on the arrangements for the conference, including its agenda, modalities and rules of procedure.

6. Towards that end, the facilitator and conveners held three rounds of open-ended informal consultations with States of the region in Glion, Switzerland, from 21 to 22 October 2013, from 25 to 26 November 2013, and from 4 to 5 February 2014. These meetings gave States of the region the opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue on the arrangements and outcome of the conference as well as on matters pertaining to the establishment of the zone.

7. On 1 May 2014, the facilitator reported to the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.[3] States parties took note of this report and renewed their appreciation for the tireless efforts of the facilitator. They also expressed appreciation for the constructive engagement of the States of region and took note of the intention of the facilitator and the conveners to host additional informal meetings aimed at finalizing the preparations for the conference. States parties recalled the importance of a process leading to the full implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and the practical steps to that end endorsed at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Many States parties expressed support for convening the conference as soon as possible before the end of 2014.

8. The facilitator and conveners held two subsequent rounds of informal consultative meetings with States of the region in Geneva, on 14 May 2014 and from 24 to 25 June 2014. The meetings allowed States of the region to continue their constructive engagement and serious consideration of the arrangements and outcome of the conference, including on the basis of non-papers and proposals circulated by the facilitator and the conveners as well as by States of the region. Despite these extended consultations, there continue to be differences among the parties on several important aspects of the conference, including on its agenda, and hence agreement on the modalities for the conference had not yet been reached.

9. On 28 September 2013, in his statement to the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Nabil Fahmy, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, announced a new initiative, including a call for all States in the Middle East, as well as the five permanent members of the Security Council, to deposit letters with the Secretary-General confirming their support for declaring the Middle East a region free from weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Pursuant to that initiative, the Secretary-General received such letters from 21 Member States from the region and from one non-member observer State (see A/68/781). Other elements of the Foreign Minister's proposal included a call for the States of the region that have not signed or ratified any of the international primary instruments dealing with weapons of mass destruction to deposit letters with the Security Council

[3] NPT/CONF.2015/PC.III/18.

affirming their intention to join those treaties as well as for the facilitator and the conveners of the postponed conference to intensify their efforts to convene the conference.

10. The Secretary-General welcomes the removal of all declared chemical weapons from the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with its obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction as well as under Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). This achievement marks a step towards the achievement of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

11. The Secretary-General remains concerned that a failure to convene the conference prior to the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons may frustrate the ability of States parties to conduct a successful review of the operation of the Treaty and could undermine the Treaty process and related non-proliferation and disarmament objectives, particularly in the Middle East. Therefore, the Secretary-General urges all the parties concerned to make determined efforts to finalize the arrangements for the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction so that it can be held as soon as possible in 2014. The Secretary-General hopes that the States of the region take advantage of the present opportunity afforded to engage directly on security issues relevant to the present circumstances in the region and through the conference to initiate a process leading to the complete elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the region, nuclear, chemical and biological and their delivery systems. The Secretary-General reaffirms his strong support for the facilitator and for Finland as the host Government for the Conference and expresses his deep appreciation for their continuing efforts.

III. Replies received from Governments

Australia

[Original: English]
[30 May 2014]

Australia supports the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) concerning the 1995 Middle East resolution. Australia continues to strongly support the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction freely arrived at by regional States, including the early convening of a conference. We have made this clear in our national statements, including at the 2014 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Australia has also released statements through the 12-member Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) (the most recent from the 12 April 2014 NPDI Ministerial meeting in Hiroshima, Japan) regretting the postponement of the conference and expressing continuing support for the Facilitator. Japan, on behalf of the NPDI, made a further statement to this effect at the 2014 Preparatory Committee. Both statements call upon the States of the region to engage in a spirit

of constructive cooperation that will lead to an inclusive, substantive and goal-oriented conference and follow-up steps.

The Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative also submitted a working paper to the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee on establishing a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in the Middle East. It included a number of recommendations to the countries of the region, the conveners and the facilitator, other interested parties and to the international community, aimed at making progress on convening a conference.

Australia will continue to support constructive efforts towards progress in the implementation of a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[30 May 2014]

Nuclear disarmament is the main disarmament priority for Cuba, because nuclear weapons remain one of the greatest threats to human survival and the survival of life on our planet.

Cuba supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world as one of the means of achieving that goal.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first such zone in a densely populated region and to which Cuba is a party, paved the way for doing so in other regions. Latin America and the Caribbean was not only the first region to declare itself a nuclear-weapon-free zone; recently, at the Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) held in Havana in January 2014, it formally proclaimed itself a zone of peace. This represents an unprecedented milestone and a substantive step on the long road to be traversed towards international disarmament and security.

Unfortunately, despite the demand of the overwhelming majority of States and of many resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council and by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has not been possible to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East.

Cuba considers it unacceptable that agreement was not reached on the convening in 2012 of the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. The holding of that conference was important and integral to the final outcome of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, in the Middle East region would, besides helping significantly to achieve the goal of nuclear disarmament, give a huge boost to the peace process in the region. It is therefore necessary for Israel, the sole country in the region that is not a party to the NPT, to accede to the Treaty without delay and to submit all its nuclear installations to the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system.

Cuba hopes that the conference will be held, without further delay, in 2014.

Ecuador

[Original: Spanish]
[9 April 2014]

In accordance with its commitment to peace and in line with article 416 of its Constitution, Ecuador calls for the peaceful resolution of disputes and rejects any type of threat or the use of force to resolve them. It therefore condemns the development of weapons of mass destruction. In that regard, it was one of the first countries, in the 1960s, to adopt the declaration that led to the negotiation of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world.

Ecuador has welcomed the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world (Africa, South Pacific, South-East Asia, Central Asia and Mongolia) because it believes that the more territories that unite in the name of nuclear disarmament, the greater awareness there will be of the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons and the more steps that will be taken to build a safe world. As a result, it regrets the failure to convene the conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which was agreed upon at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and reiterates its call for the organizers to convene it at the earliest possible date.

Within the regional framework of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and in accordance with the Special Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament (second Summit of CELAC, Havana, 27 January 2014), the member States unanimously expressed their belief that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is a significant step for the peace process in that region, and called for the international conference on the Middle East to be held as soon as possible (see para. 14 of the Special Declaration).

Ecuador is convinced that measures to advance towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East must be based on dialogue and political will among the countries involved. In that regard, Ecuador has joined many countries in various declarations by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in calling on Israel, which is not a State Party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to accede to this instrument and to implement control and verification mechanisms, in the belief that this material act of good faith will contribute to greater trust among the parties.

Iran (Islamic Republic of)

[Original: English]
[30 May 2014]

The idea of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was proposed for the very first time by the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1974, which indicates its long-standing commitment to the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free world and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in this volatile region.

The consensual and constant adoption, since 1980, by the General Assembly, of resolutions calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the

Middle East signifies the particular importance of the realization of this noble idea for the international community. It also indicates that the establishment of such a zone enjoys the long-standing strong global support.

Moreover, the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have highlighted the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East as a matter of priority in all consensus final documents, resolutions and decisions of the successive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty.

The adoption, by the Review and Extension Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995, of a separate resolution on the Middle East as the essential and integral part of a package for the indefinite extension of the Treaty signifies the importance of this goal.

Additionally, the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, while noting that all countries in the region of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, are parties to the Treaty, reaffirmed "the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East" and paving the way for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

In an important effort to pursue the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty renewed the resolve of States parties to the Treaty to undertake, individually and collectively, all necessary measures aimed at prompt implementation of the resolution and, while recalling "the reaffirmation by the 2000 Review Conference of the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards", unanimously decided to convene a conference in 2012, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

This decision was supported overwhelmingly by the international community and significant efforts were exerted for the successful commencement of the conference in Helsinki in late 2012.

Consistent with its long-standing policy on and commitment to the idea of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, the Islamic Republic of Iran positively engaged in consultations conducted by the facilitator of the conference and declared, well in advance, its readiness to participate in the conference.

However, it was no surprise to the Islamic Republic of Iran that the planned Helsinki conference was not convened solely only owing to the opposition of the Israeli regime. This, of course, in no way exonerates the cosponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East from their responsibility for its full implementation and the conveners of such a conference from their responsibility for exerting all efforts to ensure the convening of the conference in strict accordance with the plan of action adopted in the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Notwithstanding the global call for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, owing to the intransigent policy of the Israeli regime,

including its rejection of becoming a party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to place all its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards, no progress has been achieved so far towards the establishment of such a zone.

It is crystal clear that the aggressive and expansionist policies of the Israeli regime (recent examples of which are its barbaric attacks on Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, the Syrian Arab Republic and countries outside the region), its large arsenal of nuclear and other mass destruction and sophisticated weapons, as well as non-adherence of this regime to international law, are the sources of serious and continuing threats posed by this regime and its nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction to regional and to international peace and security. This in fact is the only obstacle to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

In fact, peace and stability cannot be achieved in the Middle East as long as the Israeli regime has a massive arsenal of nuclear and other mass destruction and sophisticated weapons, continues to threaten its neighbours and the region and defies the repeated calls by the international community to comply with international principles and norms.

Against this backdrop, to promote peace and security in the Middle East and to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone therein, the international community has no choice but to exert utmost pressure on the Israeli regime to compel it to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, without any precondition or further delay and as a non-nuclear-weapon party, and to place all its nuclear facilities and activities under the comprehensive safeguards of IAEA.

Additionally, in order to pave the way for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, this regime should be forced to become a party, without any precondition or further delay, to other international legally binding instruments banning weapons of mass destruction.

Likewise, the Islamic Republic of Iran highlights the importance of the position of Non-Aligned Movement that: "The efforts related to the convening of the Helsinki conference by its conveners and the facilitator should be undertaken in accordance with the mandate adopted by the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and should be focused on convening the conference at the earliest date in 2014 and on seeking out in advance, by the conveners and the facilitator of the conference, credible assurances regarding the unconditional participation of Israel, the only country of the region that has not declared its participation in the conference and that the conference should lead, without further delay, to the universality of the Treaty in the Middle East and the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction."

For its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran, by ratifying all international treaties banning weapons of mass destruction, namely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, and fully implementing their provisions, has demonstrated its strong resolve in support of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Such legal obligations are also enforced by strong supportive policies at the highest level. One example in this regard is the address by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, at the sixteenth Summit of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (Tehran, 30 August 2012), in which he stated that: "International peace and security are among the critical issues of today's world and the elimination of catastrophic weapons of mass destruction is an urgent necessity and a universal demand ... The Islamic Republic of Iran considers the use of nuclear, chemical and similar weapons as a great and unforgivable sin. We proposed the idea of 'Middle East free of nuclear weapons' and we are committed to it."

In addition, the Islamic Republic of Iran has spared no effort in its support for meaningful steps aimed at making progress towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in appropriate international forums, including the successive Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and meetings of their Preparatory Committees.

The holding of two international conferences on disarmament and non-proliferation, in Tehran, on 17 and 18 April 2010 and 12 and 13 June 2011, at which the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East was also thoroughly examined, is among the recent contributions of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East. The Islamic Republic of Iran will continue its strong support for the establishment of this zone by taking necessary practical measures to that end.

Iraq

[Original: Arabic]
[19 March 2014]

As a matter of principle, Iraq endorses the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones as a first step towards achieving nuclear disarmament. The establishment of such zones also strengthens the security of the countries concerned, bringing them closer to realizing the lofty goal of achieving and maintaining regional and international peace and security. Based on this principle, Iraq has endorsed and contributed to efforts to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in every region, in particular, in the Middle East.

Nuclear-weapon-free zones are a vital confidence-building measure at the regional level and can be a key means of underpinning the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Such zones can also serve as a means of expressing values espoused and promoted by many of the parties that are involved in nuclear disarmament, nuclear-weapon control and non-proliferation.

Iraq affirms its unwavering belief in the importance of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, as demonstrated by its support for the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly under the agenda item on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Any attempt to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East must be preceded by such key steps as Israeli nuclear disarmament, Israel's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the placement of all its

nuclear installations under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime.

Iraq calls for the implementation of Security Council resolution 487 (1981), which calls upon Israel to immediately place its nuclear facilities under the safeguards of IAEA, and Security Council resolution 687 (1991), paragraph 14, which calls for the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

Iraq affirms the Arab demand that the objectives of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences should be realized. It also affirms that all States parties to the Treaty must take the measures required to implement the resolution, as agreed upon at the most recent Conference and at which the five nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their full commitment to the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

Iraq is disappointed with the slowdown of international efforts to convene a conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. That conference was meant to be held in Helsinki in December 2012. Iraq affirms the necessity of complying with the mandate entrusted to the facilitator, the organizing States and the United Nations in respect of the postponed 2012 conference, in accordance with the Final Document of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. A further extension of the time frame would constitute an evasion of those commitments.

Iraq (on behalf of the League of Arab States)

[Original: Arabic]
[21 May 2014]

I

The States members of the League of Arab States support the call for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all areas of the world, including a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in keeping with their commitment to nuclear disarmament as the highest priority, as affirmed by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament, held in 1978.

Since 1980, the item entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East" has been a standing item on the agenda of the General Assembly. The inclusion of that item came in response to the request made in 1974 by several States, one of which was Egypt. The General Assembly has annually adopted, by consensus, a resolution calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

II

The Arab States have supported the initiative to make the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons, and the international community has committed itself to achieving this goal. The 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which was sponsored and submitted by the three depositary States of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, became part of a package that included the indefinite extension of the Treaty.

Experience has demonstrated the commitment of the Arab States to fulfilling their obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the comprehensive safeguards agreements that they have concluded with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as well as their keenness to build optimal relations with the Agency, with the aim of ensuring that nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes.

The Arab States affirm the need to achieve the universality of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to place all nuclear facilities in the Middle East region under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system. They also stress the need for Israel to accede to the Treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon State and to place all its nuclear facilities under the Agency's comprehensive safeguards system. Such an action would foster peace and security in the region, stimulate economic and social development in the States of the region and prevent an arms race that would hinder development programmes and undermine confidence-building efforts.

The Arab States affirm that the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East constitutes the first step towards implementing the agreement that was reached over 15 years ago to rid the Middle East of nuclear weapons.

The Arab States affirm that the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East, in accordance with the action plan contained in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference, is not only an obligation for the international community and the organizers of the conference, but also a major factor in achieving regional peace, building confidence and eliminating tensions arising from nuclear proliferation in the Middle East. Those goals can be attained by adopting a comprehensive and balanced regional approach that eschews selective and biased policies.

Given the lack of compliance with the provisions of the other resolutions adopted at the 1995 Review Conference, the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty has come to serve as an extension of Israel's nuclear threat to the security of the non-nuclear weapon Arab States parties to the Treaty and a means by which nuclear-weapon States retain possession of such weapons. This is contrary to article VI of the Treaty and the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament that were adopted in 1995. If the 1995 resolution on the Middle East is not implemented, the Arab States will take the measures required to protect their interests, in accordance with the Doha Declaration of 27 March 2013, and they may review their approval of the Treaty's indefinite extension. They furthermore reiterate their resolve to achieve Arab national security by all legitimate means.

Ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons is a fundamental and indispensable condition for achieving security, stability and peace. It is also an important basis for building confidence. The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East would ensure implementation of the many relevant General Assembly resolutions, as well as the implementation of Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991), which stress the importance of establishing such a zone and placing Israeli nuclear facilities under the comprehensive safeguards system of IAEA.

The Council of the League of Arab States adopted resolution 7718 at an extraordinary session held on 10 November 2013 at the League headquarters in Cairo. In that resolution, the Council endorsed the Egyptian initiative to revitalize efforts to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction and pledged to provide political support for that initiative and strive for its success. Accordingly, the States members of the League of Arab States and the Islamic Republic of Iran sent letters to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in support of the initiative that Egypt presented to the General Assembly on 28 December 2013 calling for the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. In those letters, which were issued as a document of the General Assembly (A/68/781), the States members of the League of Arab States and the Islamic Republic of Iran supported the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. It should be noted that Israel did not send such a letter.

Although they deplored the postponement of the 2012 conference, the States members of the League of Arab States nonetheless agreed to participate in the three rounds of informal consultations held in Glion, Switzerland, that were convened by the organizers of the 2012 conference. They did so despite the uncertainty surrounding the consultations, which were held without an established agenda and outside the context of the United Nations. The Arab States also participated in the consultative meetings on this matter that were held in Geneva in May 2014.

III

On behalf of the States members of the League of Arab States, Iraq presented a working paper entitled "Implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East" at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in New York from 28 April to 9 May 2014. That paper set out the Arab position regarding the establishment in the Middle East of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. The main points made in that paper were:

(a) Over the past three years, the Arab States have made a number of concessions and contributed positively to attempts to ensure the success of preparations to convene the postponed 2012 conference. For this reason, under no circumstances will the Arab States be held responsible for the failure of others. Nor will they accept any assertion that the failure was caused by the inability of the States of the region to arrive at an understanding or to compromise;

(b) The Arab States will continue to cooperate with the facilitator and the organizing parties in the period leading up to the 2015 Review Conference, which the Arab States consider to be a crossroads in the process, so long as the preparatory process remains within the context of the mandate and terms of reference adopted by the 2010 Review Conference;

(c) If the postponed 2012 conference is not convened and serious negotiations on the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East have not begun before the 2015 Review Conference, the Arab States will take the necessary measures to protect their interests;

The working paper also included important recommendations aimed at achieving this goal, including:

(d) Convening the postponed 2012 conference is no longer a regional demand, but rather has become an international responsibility, and that the decision to convene the conference was arrived at by consensus at the 2010 Review Conference;

(e) The organizers are obliged to abide by the mandate and terms of reference set out in the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference, and that no issues extraneous to negotiations on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East are to be introduced;

(f) The postponed 2012 conference must be convened as soon as possible, so that the implementation of its outcomes can be reviewed and a comprehensive report can be submitted 2015 Review Conference;

(g) Implementation of the agreements reached in 2010 regarding the Middle East is essential to the success of the 2015 Review Conference.

IV

The Council of the League of Arab States at the summit and ministerial levels has adopted a number of resolutions related to the 2012 conference [a list of those resolutions is available in the files of the Secretariat]. At its twenty-fifth ordinary session, held in Kuwait on 26 and 27 March 2013, the Council of the League, meeting at the summit level, adopted the Kuwait Declaration, in which it stated:

> "We reaffirm our long-standing position regarding the urgent need to rid the Middle East of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and to put an end to the arms race in the region. We also reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and call for the convening as soon as possible of an international conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction. We furthermore call on the international community to compel Israel to sign the Treaty and dismantle its nuclear-weapon arsenal."

Israel

[Original: English]
[28 May 2014]

In recent years, Israel has sought to lay the foundation for peace in the region based on a historical reconciliation, embodying the notions of compromise, mutual trust and respect, open borders and good neighbourliness. The foundation for coexistence between Israel and its neighbours was laid in bilateral peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan. Israel still hopes that peace treaties will be reached with the Palestinians, as well as other neighbouring countries in the region. In addition, after the Madrid Conference of 1991, Israel made a substantial effort to contribute to the success of the arms control and regional security talks within the framework of the multilateral track of the peace process. The arms control and regional security talks were the appropriate forum to promote confidence and address regional security issues and challenges. These talks were, unfortunately, discontinued by others in the region, instead of becoming an important channel for regional dialogue.

At present, in the Middle East there is neither regional dialogue nor a mechanism to develop confidence-building measures between the countries of the region. Embarking on a process which could result in modest arms control measures and the eventual establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems is therefore extremely complex. It raises many practical questions that emanate from the chronically unstable nature of the Middle East and the absence of a broader regional peace. It should also be noted that there is no precedent for such a comprehensive weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in other less troubled parts of the world.

Despite this lack of progress both regionally and globally, Israel attaches great importance to nuclear non-proliferation, and has made great efforts in recent years to abide by and respect global non-proliferation norms, including in the field of export controls and enhanced cooperation regarding the various supplier regimes.

These efforts constitute an important component of the overall effort to improve the regional security climate. It was in this spirit that Israel signed the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1993, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996 and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in 1995. In addition, in 2004 Israel adopted the Export and Import Order (Control over Chemical, Biological and Nuclear Exports). This Order prohibits the export of equipment, technology and services designated for weapons-of-mass-destruction programmes and establishes a control system for dual-use items in the nuclear, chemical and biological domain. The list of the controlled items is based on the lists established by the Australia Group and the Nuclear Suppliers Group. By adopting this Order, Israel implemented its policy of adherence to these export control regimes. Israel's export control legislation on missiles and related material reflects Israel's adherence to the Missile Technology Control Regime. It is incorporated in the 2008 Defense Export Control Act and in related secondary legislative instruments. Israel welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) and the extension of the mandate of the 1540 (2004) Committee by the terms of Security Council resolution 1977 (2011).

The disturbing realities in the Middle East mandate a practical step-by-step approach, bearing in mind the ultimate goal of achieving peaceful relations and reconciliation among all the States in the region. This process, as has been demonstrated by the experience of all other regions in which a nuclear-weapon-free zone has been established, is inherently an incremental one. Realistically, it can only begin with modest arrangements for confidence-building measures in order to build the necessary trust for more ambitious cooperative security undertakings. Effective arms control measures can only be achieved and sustained in a region where war, armed conflict, terrorism, political hostility and incitement are not features of everyday life.

Although General Assembly resolution 67/25 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East does not fully reflect Israel's position in relation to the complexities of the nuclear issue in the region, Israel has joined the consensus on the resolution for almost 30 years. Israel has substantive reservations regarding certain elements of the resolution, in particular the modalities of achieving the goals of the resolution. Israel has acted in this way out of its belief that, instead of highlighting different positions, there is a fundamental need for building confidence and creating a common vision for all the

States of the Middle East. Promotion of this vision must take into account the particular circumstances and characteristics of the Middle East and also recent transformational changes in the region. It is our view that any resolution concerning arms control, regional security or a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East should be based on consensus and emanate from arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region.

The region of the Middle East embodies and reflects many of the arms control and disarmament challenges faced by the international community. It is no coincidence that four out of the five major violations of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons have occurred in the Middle East — Iraq under Saddam Hussein, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran, while the fifth case, namely the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, has been deeply involved in nuclear proliferation to the Middle East. The nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Syrian Arab Republic are under continuous investigation by IAEA, while both countries withhold cooperation and place every possible difficulty in the way of the IAEA inspections and investigations. The Syrian Arab Republic has not yet declared the nuclear fuel destined for the nuclear reactor built by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Deir al Zour site and its whereabouts in the Syrian Arab Republic remain a mystery. In addition, the Middle East has seen several instances in living memory in which chemical weapons have been used by States in the region, and the Syrian chemical weapons capability continues to cause extreme concern to Israel and the region as a whole.

There is an urgent need to intensify efforts to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles to State and non-State actors in the Middle East. It is also crucial to limit the spread of nuclear fuel cycle technologies, particularly to States that are in non-compliance with their international obligations in this sphere. There is an urgent necessity for a range of international, regional and national efforts to promote more stringent controls on sensitive exports, especially to countries of concern that are engaged in proliferation activities and to those involved in supporting terrorism.

One of the most central threats today in the Middle East is hostile policies and statements of the Islamic Republic of Iran, its pursuit of nuclear weapons, its aggressive development of missile technology and its active involvement in supporting, supplying and training of terrorist organizations. It is clear that without halting and reversing the Iranian military nuclear programme, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to promote an international or regional agenda aimed at strengthening the prevailing non-proliferation regime.

Israel shares the concern of the international community pertaining to strengthening the safety and security of nuclear materials and facilities to prevent illicit trafficking. In this spirit, Israel has joined several conventions and codes of conduct in the field of nuclear safety and security. It has joined the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials and has ratified the amendment to the Convention. It has also signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. In addition, Israel is an active member of the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. It has been participating in the Container Security Initiative, the United States Megaports Initiative, the Second Line Defense Core program and the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, while actively supporting

the Proliferation Security Initiative. Israel took part in the Nuclear Security Summits held in Washington, D.C. in 2010, in Seoul in 2012 and in The Hague in 2014.

In regards to confidence-building in the sphere of regional security, Israel has positively engaged in the European Union seminars (both in 2011 and 2012) convened in Brussels entitled "promoting confidence-building in support of a process aimed at establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and means of delivery in the Middle East". Israel also participated in the forum of the IAEA Director General in November 2011, "in which participants from the Middle East and other interested parties could learn from the experience of other regions including in the area of confidence-building relevant to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone".

Israel's perspective and policy in the field of regional security and arms control has always been a pragmatic and realistic approach. It is rooted in its belief that all security concerns of regional members should be taken into account and be addressed within the regional context. The essential prerequisites for the eventual establishment of the Middle East as a mutually verifiable zone, free of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems are, inter alia, comprehensive and durable peace between the regional parties and full compliance by all regional States with their arms control and non-proliferation obligations. The international experience has demonstrated that such a zone can only emanate from within a region, through direct negotiations between regional States. The Middle East region is no exception. No majority votes or one-sided resolutions in international forums can be a substitute for a broad regional dialogue and cooperation. As the international community has recognized, the establishment of a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone should be based on arrangements freely arrived at among all States of the region in the context of a stable and comprehensive peace. From October 2013 to May 2014, Israel participated in four rounds of regional multilateral consultations that took place in Glion and Geneva, as Israel believes that a successful direct dialogue, based on consensus between the regional parties, could send a strong signal that the States of the region are capable of working together towards a shared vision of a more secure and peaceful Middle East, free from conflict, wars and weapons of mass destruction.

Lebanon

[Original: Arabic]
[7 May 2014]

The Ministry of Defence submits that Lebanon affirms the following:

- Lebanon does not possess weapons of mass destruction, and regards the threat or use of such weapons as illegal;
- Lebanon complies with General Assembly resolutions, particularly as regards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and cooperates in efforts to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. It expresses its deep concern, however, about Israel's failure to adhere to international legitimacy. Israel maintains a nuclear arsenal that constitutes a threat to all the countries of the region, and consequently to international peace and security;

- Lebanon supports and welcomes all initiatives to achieve disarmament, particularly in the Middle East, and reaffirms the role of the United Nations in that regard;
- Lebanon has introduced laws and regulations that allow for the monitoring of the export, transit and cross-border transport of any type of weapon of mass destruction or related components;
- Lebanon does not provide assistance of any kind to any group seeking to acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, provide or use nuclear or other weapons;
- Lebanon supports Arab conferences and initiatives aimed at eliminating the causes of tension in the Middle East, in particular by ridding the region of weapons of mass destruction. It participates actively in all meetings of the technical committee of the League of Arab States responsible for preparing a draft treaty on ridding the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction and, in particular, nuclear weapons. Lebanon stresses the danger which Israel's weapons of mass destruction represent for international peace and Arab national security.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[27 May 2014]

As the main driver of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone to be established in a densely populated area, Mexico supports and encourages the creation of more such zones.

Mexico thus considers that, while militarily denuclearized zones are not an end in themselves, they represent an intermediate step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the region of the Middle East was a key component of the commitments behind the 1995 agreement on the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the agreements reached at the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences, which were aimed at helping to reduce tensions in the region and to create a climate of peace and security, as well as furthering the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons in that part of the world and strengthening the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Mexico believes that it is crucial to convene the conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction as soon as possible. On the understanding that nuclear-weapon-free zones can be established only on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the countries concerned, Mexico reiterates its willingness to cooperate with the co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution and the facilitator of the conference, offering its experience and lessons learned during the establishment of the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In addition, Mexico will continue to support the adoption of resolutions on this issue by both the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Board of Governors and the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as well as the inclusion of the issue in discussions and resolutions regarding the need for strict compliance with the Non-Proliferation Treaty, such as the resolution submitted each year by the New Agenda Coalition and those drafted by the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative.

Portugal

[Original: English]
[14 May 2014]

Portugal supports and highlights the importance of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East adopted by the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear weapons (NPT), as well as the implementation of the action plan resulting from the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, in what concerns the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which underscores the importance of a process leading to the full implementation of the 1995 resolution.

In accordance with the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference, and having designated Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, of Finland as facilitator, there was to have been a conference in 2012, involving the States Parties from the region. The Conference has yet to be held, however. Portugal regrets that the Conference has been postponed and is waiting for it to happen and its objectives fully pursued.

Portugal fully supports the work of the facilitator and, in line with its partners from European Union, also lends its support to the initiatives that aim to promote the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

In another area, through the European Union non-proliferation consortium, Portugal has been supporting the process leading to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone, through participation in some European think-tank networks and research centres, as well as through its participation in seminars which aim to encourage political dialogue and the discussion of security questions, among them the disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and to promote the education in those areas. We would like to point out, in this context, two seminars, organized by the European Union in 2011 and 2012, on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Portugal attended both seminars and considers such initiatives to be of crucial importance to foster dialogue and build confidence among all parties concerned.

Portugal has been appealing to all Parties concerned for a fruitful result as soon as possible.

Syrian Arab Republic

[Original: Arabic]
[29 May 2014]

The Syrian Arab Republic was one of the first States in the region of the Middle East to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in

1968 and firmly believes that the possession of nuclear weapons by any State or acquisition of those weapons by non-State actors or terrorist groups threatens international peace and security.

The Syrian Arab Republic believes that the establishment of regional nuclear-weapon-free zones is a positive and effective means to achieve nuclear disarmament, foster non-proliferation and promote global security and stability. The Syrian Arab Republic calls on the international community to take practical and effective steps to establish, without delay, a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

The Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the only way to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and to rein in the threat of nuclear proliferation is for Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear party and to submit all its nuclear activities to an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards agreement.

The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates its grave concern over the obstacles to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East posed by Israel, which persists in its refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear party and to submit all its nuclear installations to inspection by IAEA, in violation of the internationally recognized resolutions adopted by the Security Council, notably Council resolution 487 (1981), and by the General Assembly, IAEA, and review conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the creation in the Middle East of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should not be linked in any way to the peace process in the region because the principal aim of creating such a link is to impede and delay the establishment of that zone. Moreover, any designation of the States of the Middle East does not constitute a definition of that region.

The Syrian Arab Republic has constantly striven in Arab and international forums to make the Middle East into a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction and, above all, nuclear weapons. On behalf of the Arab Group, in April 2003 the Syrian Arab Republic proposed to the Security Council in New York an initiative to make the Middle East a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and, in particular, nuclear weapons. However, the position of certain influential States of the Council blocked the initiative. In December 2003, the Syrian Arab Republic resubmitted the same initiative to the Security Council as a draft resolution in blue, and continues to wait for the Council to take action for its adoption.

By acceding to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons on Their Destruction, the Syrian Arab Republic has demonstrated once again its commitment to the creation in the Middle East of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. That step discredits Israeli claims concerning the dangers posed by the possession by certain Arab States of other weapons, claims that Israel uses as a pretext for refusing to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

The Syrian Arab Republic affirms that it is essential to uphold the provisions of the Final Document of the 2000 Treaty Review Conference. That Review Conference declared that the 1995 resolution on the Middle East will remain valid

until its goals and objectives are achieved and that it is an essential element of the outcome of the 1995 Review Conference.

The Syrian Arab Republic regrets the failure to convene an international conference in 2012 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, as called for in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It had been decided that all States of the Middle East would attend the conference with a view to establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the region. The Syrian Arab Republic rejects all of the pretexts put forward by the United States of America, a depository State of the Convention and a convening State of the 2012 conference, which prevented the conference from taking place. The Syrian Arab Republic underscores once again the responsibility of the Security Council to put pressure on Israel with a view to establishing such a zone in the region, particularly as the depository States of the Treaty are permanent members of the Council. Pressure must also be brought to bear on Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, to eliminate its nuclear stockpiles and their means of delivery and to place all nuclear activities under an IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreement in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981). The Syrian Arab Republic requests that the facilitator and the sponsors of the resolution on the Middle East convene a conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East at the earliest possible time and before the end of 2014.

The Syrian Arab Republic affirms yet again that is stands ready to cooperate with the Secretary-General of the United Nations with a view to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Ukraine

[Original: Russian]
[30 May 2014]

Ukraine has been a non-nuclear-State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons since 1994. In the 20 years since signing the Treaty, Ukraine has faithfully fulfilled all of its provisions and has also undertaken and successfully met additional obligations as part of the nuclear summit process, including by renouncing the use of highly enriched uranium. In a joint statement by Ukraine and the United States issued at the Hague nuclear summit in March 2014, Ukraine reaffirmed its commitment to the principle of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, firmly establishing its leadership in matters of nuclear security and non-proliferation.

All of these steps are being taken against the backdrop of a criminal violation by the Russian Federation of its obligations to Ukraine under the Budapest Memorandum, according to which the Russian Federation made a political commitment to guarantee the security and territorial integrity of Ukraine and the inviolability of our State borders.

IV. Reply received from the European Union

[Original: English]
[29 May 2014]

Since 1995 the European Union has been a staunch supporter of a process aimed at establishing a zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction, and means of delivery, in the Middle East.

In 1995, the European Union and its member States, together with all the countries of the Middle East and Northern African region, committed in the Barcelona Declaration to the pursuit of "a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems".

Following the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which emphasized the importance of a process leading to the full implementation of its 1995 resolution on the Middle East, the European Union organized a seminar in Brussels — on 6 and 7 July 2011 — in order to create a conducive atmosphere with the aim of supporting the process leading to the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. After the appointment of the facilitator for the 2012 conference, the European Union's Non-Proliferation Consortium of think-tanks, in close consultation with the facilitator's team and with the participation of the facilitator Jaakko Laajava of Finland, organized a second seminar in Brussels on 5 and 6 November 2012.

The full support, role and contribution of the European Union to the process have been widely recognized, including by the facilitator, with whom the Union has maintained close contact. Since the postponement of the conference, which the Union regrets, it has consistently expressed its readiness to provide further assistance to the facilitator and to the conveners of the Conference should it be asked to. In this regard, a capacity-building workshop for diplomats from the region is being prepared by the European Union Non-Proliferation Consortium for June 2014.

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Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum**

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* A/69/150.
** The information contained in the addendum was received after the submission of the main report.

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III. Replies received from Governments

Argentina

[Original: Spanish]
[21 July 2014]

Argentina reiterates its long-standing position in support of the establishment, through negotiation, of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the consolidation of such zones. It considers that these zones contribute significantly to international peace and security by safeguarding certain areas from the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, Argentina emphasizes the need for full adherence to the treaties governing those zones, both by the States in the respective regions and by the nuclear Powers under the protocols annexed to those treaties.

The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones presupposes that countries within the zone receive some basic security assurances in return. At least two main issues can be identified. The first is the need to respect all parts of the zone in keeping with the wishes of the contracting parties. The second is the need to ensure that the security doctrines of the nuclear-weapon States do not include procedures or methods to alter or weaken this objective.

Argentina considers that any group of States has the right to conclude regional treaties to ensure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories, under article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In this regard, nuclear-weapon-free zones play an important role in strengthening the non-proliferation regime and extending the areas of the world that are nuclear-weapon-free. In this context, the responsibilities of the nuclear-weapon States are essential.

Additionally, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones strengthens international and regional peace and security and represents an important contribution to achieving nuclear disarmament.

With regard to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, Argentina is closely following the situation in the region and believes that it is important to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States concerned.

Moreover, Argentina has been following with interest the process of consultations on the conference to be convened on this issue in accordance with the mandate of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.